



The Weekly Page

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Pages Learn About Legislature



Big ideas in government

Throughout the week pages grappled with understanding the three “big ideas” for a representative government: **governing society is a complex process, successful democracies rely on responsible citizens, and government affects our life every day.** As they participated in daily discussions, listened to guest speakers, and proposed bills in mock committee hearings, their understanding around the concepts deepened. On Friday, they wrote about one of the big ideas to demonstrate the depth of their new knowledge.

Senators crack down on gangs



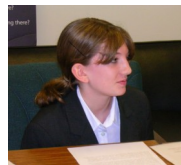
Olympia – Senate Bill 6113 was introduced yesterday by Senators Beautiful Reed and Natasha Lara. “This bill addresses the issue of gang activity and will decrease the amount of violence in our communities,” said Sen. Reed. Evidence shows that there are approximately 24,000 gangs operating in the United States and only 40 percent of gang members who commit serious crimes get caught. This bill will require traffic police to focus

on gang activity, gather evidence of crimes and put gang leaders and members under heavier surveillance.

Pages write bills

Pages worked individually or in small groups to write bills designed to address issues which were relevant to them and the state. They had their choice of working up a social bill or a fiscal bill to present in a mock committee hearing on Thursday with their partners. Hard decisions had to be made about cutting services and/or raising taxes in the budget committees. Topics for social bills included academic requirements for high school athletes, gang violence, cyberbullying, high school start times, availability of foster homes, and childhood obesity.

Rep removes high fat foods in schools



Olympia – Yesterday, Representative Kacie Masten introduced House Bill 2315, which addresses the issue of childhood obesity. “The bill is a good one because it will reduce the health risks that appear in adulthood due to poor eating habits,” said Rep. Masten. Past statistics show 17 percent of 2-19 year olds are obese, and that figure will increase to over 20 percent by 2010. Being obese can lead to health issues like type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, even vitamin deficiencies. The bill requires that public schools take high fat foods out of cafeteria offerings and replace them with healthier foods. Bill sponsors believe that this should help to create healthy eating habits in students.





Mock committees debate, vote

Simulated committee hearings were held on Thursday. Pages read their bills and “committee members,” governed by the rules of parliamentary procedure, debated the pros and cons of the proposals. A “DO PASS” or “DO NOT PASS” recommendation was then voted upon, allowing a bill to continue on in the legislative process. As in the real political system, some bills died in committee.

Kreifels and Grant offer ideas to balance budget



Olympia—Yesterday Senators Alyson Kreifels and Courtney Grant met with the Senate Ways and Means Committee to pound out hard solutions to a serious budget shortfall predicted for the next biennium. “There just doesn’t seem to be any way around raising some

taxes,” said Sen. Grant. Among the suggested products slated for a tax increase were cigarettes, liquor and soda pop. Both Sen. Kreifels and Sen. Grant called for a 50 cent tax on cigarettes. “Most people will continue to buy cigarettes because they are addicted, so a 50 cent increase will not deter them from buying their smokes. In the long run, it might cause a few people to quit because they don’t want to pay the extra money. Then we won’t have to pay for their healthcare later when they get sick from respiratory ailments,” said Sen. Kreifels. Sen. Grant also advocated for a one percent tax on admission to movies, concerts, and sporting events. “These are things we do for entertainment and they haven’t been taxed in the past. A one percent tax will bring in about \$12 million,” said Sen. Grant. The increase in all taxes proposed by the senators will help end

the deficit by bringing in a total of \$548 million. “Everyone is going to feel the pinch until we can get this fiscal crisis solved,” said Sen. Kreifels.

Later school starts have positive effect



Olympia – Senate Bill 7302 was introduced yesterday by Senators Elise Jordan, Mallery Walk, and Tara Samaris. “This bill addresses the issue of high school start times and will improve the

academic success of our sleep-deprived students,” said Sen. Jordan. Sixty percent of children under the age of 18 complained of being tired during the day, and 15 percent said they fell asleep at school during this year. Sleep deprivation creates nervous, anxious, and exhausted students, not the type teachers like to encounter in their classrooms. “School should be intellectually challenging, not physically challenging. Getting up so early is physically difficult for students and depletes them of the energy they have left for learning and thinking,” said Sen. Samaris. If this bill becomes law, all public high schools will be prohibited from starting before 8:30 a.m.

Teens may get to sleep in



Olympia – Senate Bill 6682 was introduced yesterday by Senator Cameron Ford. “This bill addresses the issue of teen sleep deprivation and will improve student achievement,” said Sen. Ford. If this bill becomes law, public schools will be prohibited from starting before 9 a.m. All four main academic classes—English, math, science and history—will be required to meet for 90 minutes, with elective classes meeting for 60 minutes. The school day will end at 5 p.m.

Bill seeks to decrease DUI fatalities



Olympia – House Bill 3269 was introduced yesterday by Representatives Andrew Rodriguez and Kirk Lestelle. “This bill addresses the issue of drunk driving and will reduce fatalities and keep roads safe,” said Rep.

Rodriguez. Statistics show that in 2006 there were 294 alcohol-related traffic fatalities. Should this bill become law, sobriety checkpoints will be set up where a high number of crashes related to drunk driving have occurred. Sobriety checkpoints are road blocks set up by the State Patrol at different locations around the state where drivers are stopped and checked to see if they are driving under the influence of alcohol. The public will be notified when and where there will be a checkpoint in advance. All vehicles, or a designated sequence, such as every fifth car, will be required to stop.

Students caught before dropping out



Olympia – Yesterday, Representative Ashlyn Sehnert introduced House Bill 2009, which addresses the issue of school dropouts. “The bill is a good one because it encourage students to stay in school,” said Rep. Sehnert. Statistics show that 40 percent of students at about 22 schools in the state who start as

freshman drop out before their senior year. The bill will require all public elementary and secondary schools to create dropout prevention programs, provide counselors to students with family problems, and invite guest speakers to talk about the success in life of dropouts vs. college graduates.

Rep raises legal drinking age

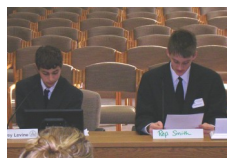


Olympia – House Bill 1001 was introduced yesterday by Representative Elliot Fletcher. “This bill addresses the issue of the legal drinking age and will reduce the alcohol-related problems in young people,” said Rep. Fletcher. Currently an adult must be 21 years old to buy

and consume liquor. “Unfortunately, youthful drinking often leads to domestic violence issues and driving accidents,” said Rep. Fletcher. Forty-six percent of young adults, age 18-25, have been involved in drinking-related domestic violence incidents. According to a 2005 National Institute of Mental Health report, the part of the brain that weighs risks, makes judgments and controls impulsive behavior develops throughout the teen years and does not mature until around age 25. If this bill becomes law, the legal drinking age will be raised to age 25.

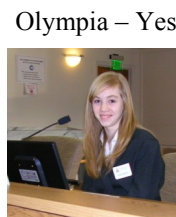
Funds will also be available for rehabilitation centers to provide for alcoholics that need help restructuring their lives.

Minors given a breath of fresh air



Olympia – Yesterday, Representatives Jeffrey Levine and Sterling Smith introduced House Bill 2222, which addresses the issue of secondhand smoke. “The bill is a good one because it will prevent health problems in children,” said Rep. Levine. “Children cannot escape exposure to the secondhand smoke in a car,” said Rep. Smith. Studies indicate that children can get a variety of diseases from secondhand smoke, ranging from ear infections to asthma to bronchitis. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services reports that secondhand smoke contains formaldehyde, benzene, vinyl chloride, arsenic, ammonia and hydrogen. All these chemicals are highly toxic poisons. The bill will make it a primary offense to be smoking in a car that contains a child under the age of 16. The fine will be \$101 with increasing increments of \$250 for each next offense.

Harkson puts a stop to cyberbullying



Olympia – Yesterday, Representative Elisabeth Harkson introduced House Bill 1400, which addresses the issue of cyberbullying. “The bill is a good one because it prevents harassment over the internet and eventually will bring it to a stop,” said Rep. Harkson. Cyberbullying has become more common and has even caused death to some of its victims. The Legislature will require public schools to offer awareness classes for students to put a stop to this growing problem. Fundraisers will be held to pay for instructors of these classes.

Bill protects young offenders



Olympia – Yesterday, Representatives Alyson Potter and Brianna Cutshaw introduced Senate Bill 7999, which addresses the issue of minors being charged as adults. “The bill is a good one because it protects immature teens from the confusion of an adult trial and from the abuses in adult prisons,” said Rep. Cutshaw. Statistics show that nationally children in adult jails and prisons are five times more likely to be raped, twice as likely to be beaten by staff, and 50% more likely to be attacked with a weapon than youths sent to juvenile facilities. The bill prevents teens under the age of 19 from being charged as adults without being given a comprehensive test.

Cuts/taxes only way end state's financial crisis

Olympia—Yesterday, the House Ways and Means Committee heard testimony from Representatives Erin Schneider, Kieran McKeon, Rachel DeCordoba, Luda Khmaruk, Austin Campbell, Joe Englehart, Collin Marshall, Megan Gimmetstad and Edward Harriage regarding the projected revenue shortfall for the 2009-2011 biennium and the suggested remedies to balance



the state operating budget. "We want to cause as little suffering as possible, but we are in a terrible economic crisis,

the worst we've seen in decades," said Rep. Khmaruk. Among the list of cuts offered were trimming bodyguards for the Governor and Lt. Governor by 50 percent, forgoing class-size reductions in grades K-12, reducing supervision for low-risk criminals, eliminating customer service staff in the Department of Fish and Wildlife's regional offices and cutting government spending on goods and services by 25 percent. "I don't like what we have had to propose," said Rep. DeCordoba, "but we simply have to bite the bullet. Our citizens are having to make sacrifices and so should the government." Although many legislators had made campaign promises not to raise taxes, the committee saw a need to make up for lost revenues by adding a 5 cent



tax on 12-ounce soft drinks, placing a one percent tax on movies, concerts and sporting events, and raising the tax on cigarettes by 50 cents. In addition, the lawmakers suggested a temporary .5 percent hike in the sales tax to 7 percent. Rep. Englehart rationalized that it was a modest increase that would only be in effect for a short time and would raise nearly \$1 billion. Other taxing options included Rep. McKeon's idea to raise property taxes by an additional 25 cents per \$1,000 to bring in \$319 million. Finally, Rep. Campbell suggested the previously unpopular solution of legalizing gambling to allow electronic slot machines in card rooms, restaurants, bars, bowling alleys and race tracks. "We should follow in the footsteps of other states where gambling has been legalized and forms the backbone of their economy.



We already have a state lottery and adding a game like 'Quick-draw Keno' wouldn't be much of a change," said Rep. Campbell. "I know times are bad, but we should come out of this situation in good shape if we make some sacrifices now," said Rep. Schneider.

Student reporters' voices heard



Olympia – Senate Bill 6293 was introduced yesterday by Senators Thu Bui and Alison Wood. "This bill addresses the issue of censorship in high schools publications and will allow students a greater extent of freedom to express

their opinions in their school's newspaper," said Sen. Bui. The bill will prohibit school administrators from cancelling the printing of high school papers because of controversial topics in the issues. "We find that students' basic rights are being threatened by their schools," said Sen. Wood. "This will allow students to have the same rights as community newspapers and teach them responsible journalism."

Guest speakers visit Page School

Rep. Hans Dunshee (D-44th), State Auditor Brian Sonntag, Sen. Dan Swecker (R-20th), and Rep. John McCoy (D-38th) joined the pages during classes on Wednesday. The speakers talked about what led



them to their current positions and shared insightful information about their jobs. Pages were able to interact with these guests by asking questions and sharing their own views in response to the speaker's questions.

Bill fosters good homes for children



Olympia – House Bill 3866 was introduced yesterday by Representative Catherine South. "This bill addresses the issue of housing for foster children and will cut down on the time it takes to process foster families' applications," said Rep. South. The bill will use volunteers to help reduce the DSHS work load which

has almost doubled in the last few months, according to Rep. South.

Reps kill death penalty



Olympia – House Bill 2642 was introduced yesterday by Representatives Katelyn Andrews and Alexis Klippert. “This bill addresses the issue of the death penalty and will prohibit any Washington prison from using the death penalty as a form of punishment. Everyone deserves a chance at life whether it be in the community or in jail,” said Rep. Andrews. The new law will prevent judges or juries from sentencing convicted murderers to death. Studies have shown that keeping the felons in prison for life is cheaper than paying for the long and costly trials and appeals that occur when someone is sentenced to death.

Parents get schooled on vaccinations



Olympia – Yesterday, Representatives Grace Nagy, Cody Bosarge, and Josh Boonstra introduced

House Bill 3999, which addresses the issue of childhood vaccinations. “The bill is a good one because it will educate the public and parents about the consequences of failing to protect our children with immunizations,” said Rep. Nagy. The bill will provide \$2 million for magazine, billboard and television ads aimed at educating parents on the benefits to vaccinating their children.

House bill jumps last hurdle for healthier students

Olympia – House Bill 2332 was introduced yesterday by Repre-



sentatives Nick Jaech and Molly Smith. “This bill addresses the issue of childhood obesity and will slow and eventually reverse the increasing inactivity and unhealthy eating patterns of school-aged chil-

dren,” said Rep. Jaech. If passed, the Legislature would require physical education classes lasting 150 minutes a week in all elementary schools and 225 minutes in all middle and high schools. Also, this bill would prohibit the sale of all soft drinks and use of trans-fats in menu items. A recent study found that

an estimated 17 percent of children and adolescents ages 2-19 are overweight, a rate that has tripled since 1980. Another study reported that 1/3 of all children born in or after the year of 2000 will develop type 2 diabetes in their lifetime. “We hope to change this trend with our legislation,” said Rep. Smith.

Legislature bans secondhand smoke in cars

Olympia – Senate Bill 5128 was introduced yesterday by Sena-



tors Juliana Cobb, Tessa Wren, and Bridget Fayden. “This bill addresses the effect of second-hand smoke on children and will prevent young people from developing diseases associated with this practice,” said Sen. Cobb.

The Department of Health and

Human Services reported that secondhand smoke contains more than 250 chemicals known to be toxic or cancer-causing, according to Sen. Cobb. The Legislature intends to cite anyone caught smoking in their car with a minor under the age of 18 present and fine them \$101.

College students drowning in debt



Olympia – Senate Bill 7891 was introduced yesterday by Senators Kylie Cave and Claire Campbell. “This bill addresses the issue of credit cards for college students and will reduce student debt in the U.S.,” said Sen. Cave. The Legislature

plans to place a mandatory age limit on credit card applicants. Those under 25 will be unable to obtain a credit card unless a parent co-signs with the student. Classes on living a debt-free lifestyle will also be required of all 18-year-olds planning on acquiring a credit card. “This bill is completely focused on saving students from over-spending,” said Sen. Campbell. “It is tragic that college students are forced to leave school to pay off their own debts.” Apparently the average graduate student has about \$5,800 in credit card debt. “Though this bill may be a setback for some, it will hopefully be a great benefit for others, keeping students out of debt so they can go into life without having the nagging worry of paying off a large sum of money,” said Sen. Cave.

High schools require later start times for optimal performance



Olympia – Senate Bill 5430 was introduced yesterday by Senators Derek Hanson and Morgan Weller. “This bill addresses the issue

of high school start times and will keep students alert and healthy,” said Sen. Hanson. Sixty percent of students complained about being tired at school, and 15 percent said they have fallen asleep during school, according to a recent survey. High schools with start times before 8 a.m. have more sleep deprived students than those who start after that time. Also, experts say that teens need 8.5 to 9.5 hours of sleep, but 85 percent of teens have less than 8.5 hours of sleep. Dr. Kyla Wahlstrom of the University of Minnesota noted that after the Minneapolis Public School District changed school start times from 7:15 to 8:40 a.m., students markedly improved their performance. “We hope to have a positive effect on not only the health of our young people,” remarked Senator Weller, “but also on the performance of our schools.”

School publications get freedom



Olympia – Senate Bill 5000 was introduced yesterday by Senators Alex Curtis and Lyle Baumgaertner. “This bill addresses the issue of freedom of speech in schools

and will limit censorship by school principals,” said Sen. Baumgaertner. The bill will allow students to be more expressive in their local school newspaper as long as it follows journalistic standards and is school appropriate. There are newspaper articles now that are being censored because they bring up issues that are considered to be private. One such example was a school newspaper which interviewed three women who became pregnant while attending school. Complete anonymity was in place, but because it brought up talks about birth control among 14-year-old freshmen, this article was deleted. “Our hopes are that students can write about anything that they please and that this bill will pass for the benefit of our young students,” said Sen. Curtis.

Why do failing athletes still get to play?

Olympia – Senate Bill 6214 was introduced yesterday by Senator Kenley O'Hanlon. “This bill addresses the issue of athletic participation and will require that public high school athletes pass all of their classes before playing in games,” said Sen. O'Hanlon. Many of Washington's athletes are not on track to graduate, and the bill is promoting the idea to raise the WIAA standards in order to help those athletes that may not make it to the college and the pros. “Currently, many of Washington's athletes are being prepared for ‘failure beyond school’ because they are being given too much leeway with their academics,” said Sen. O'Hanlon.



Page School on the web

The Page School has its own web site. You can find us at:

www1.leg.wa.gov/WorkingwithLeg/



[PageSchool/](#). This newsletter has been posted there.